

Sports integrity

The prevention of match-fixing in sport competitions is of utmost priority for EGBA members. The fight against match fixing is a global responsibility and all stakeholders (public authorities, betting operators, sports organisations, players' unions) must take an active role on its prevention.

A responsible industry

When properly regulated, the Internet provides a unique opportunity to prevent the abuse of online betting websites for match fixing purposes. Initiatives such as ESSA Sports Betting integrity¹ allows the detection of suspicious betting patterns, and provides gambling regulators and sports federations an electronic trail of data. The costs related to the ESSA Sports Betting Integrity system, which are provided for free to sport federations, are entirely borne by betting operators. In 2015, it raised 38 alerts in Europe, 18 of which came from tennis.²

Effective regulation

Evidence has shown that only regulation which meets customers' expectations and is in-line with market reality will help to control the black market in sports betting, and **to minimise the risk of corruption and match-fixing**. Therefore, overly-restrictive regulation (such as bans on-live betting) is counterproductive as it drives consumers to unregulated black-market operators.

Hence, "at an EU level, the location of the match-fixing integrity threat to sport must continue to be located within its wider economic and political context and including integration with policy approaches to the regulation of online gambling, the regulation of financial services and anti-money laundering initiatives"³.

A growing awareness

A poor regulatory framework of sport policy maintains the erroneous perception that conflicts of interest and bad practices are tolerated. In recent years, policy makers have acknowledged the importance to fight this transnational threat. Many initiatives have seen the light at international and national level (with the support and collaboration of the private betting industry amongst others). This includes notably the Council of Europe convention on match fixing, the IOC's betting integrity recommendations or the UK Integrity Action Plan.

A shared responsibility

Governance: Significant governance issues remain in what concerns the **enforcement of sporting rules and sanctions**. Corruption within sport itself, along with a widespread lack of player salary payments in some areas **is allowing organised crime to exploit the financial vulnerabilities of players**⁴.

Sanctions: As called by the European Parliament in previous reports on online gambling, "*a common definition of sport fraud and cheating should be developed and [...] betting fraud should be penalised as a criminal offence throughout Europe*". To this purpose, the **EP Sport Intergroup** was established in 2015 to drive discussions on sport related issues and to focus attention on specific policy needs and recommendations.

Education: Athletes and sport staff are the main gatekeepers of sports integrity. As a matter of priority, they need to be fully informed of the applicable rules and the risks of engaging in corruption practices. This can be achieved through education programs such as the PROTECT INTEGRITY initiative.⁵

¹ <http://eu-ssa.org/>

² <http://www.eu-ssa.org/wp-content/uploads/QR4-BROCHURE-WEB.pdf>

³ "Study on risk assessment and management and prevention of conflicts of interest in the prevention and fight against betting-related match fixing in the EU 28 – Final Report", Asser Institute, July 2014, p. 138.

⁴ <http://www.egba.eu/facts-and-figures/studies/6-sports-betting-report/>

⁵ <http://www.protect-integrity.com/>